

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652 N/A
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: SPRING LOCAL ELECTIONS AND REFERENDA MAY PROVIDE TEST
OF POLITICAL MOOD

REF: ROME 1163

1. SOME FIVE MILLION ITALIANS COMPRISING SLIGHTLY OVER 12 PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE WILL CAST BALLOTS IN LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR MAY AND JUNE. IN THE FIRST AND LARGEST CONTEST ON MAY 14-15, NEW ADMINISTRATIONS WILL BE ELECTED IN THE PROVINCES OF PAVIA (LOMBARDY) AND VITERBO (LAZIO); IN ADDITION, VOTERS WILL ELECT NEW LOCAL ADMINISTRATIONS IN 816 CITIES AND TOWNS THROUGHOUT ITALY, INCLUDING THE PROVINCIAL CAPITALS OF PAVIA AND NOVARA. TWO WEEKS LATER, MAY 28-29, LOCAL ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD IN 24 CITIES AND TOWNS IN SICILY (SEE PALERMO 381). THE SPECIAL STATUS REGIONS OF FRIULI AND VALLE D'AOSTA WILL VOTE ON NEW REGIONAL COUNCILS AND LOCAL ADMINISTRATIONS ON JUNE 25-26 (SEE TRIESTE 201). IN THESE ELECTIONS, VOTERS

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WILL SELECT A NEW CITY COUNCIL IN TRIESTE, WHERE OPPONENTS OF THE GOI-YUGOSLAV OSIMO TREATY SETTLING THE STATUS OF TRIESTE ARE PRESENTING A "CIVIC LIST" AGAINST THE "ITALIAN PARTIES." IN ALL, 1360 CITIES AND TOWNS WILL BE INVOLVED.

2. ALTHOUGH LOCAL ISSUES AND PERSONALITIES CAN BE EXPECTED TO DOMINATE THE SMALLER CONTESTS, PARTICULARLY

IN TOWNS UNDER 5,000 WHERE THE OUTCOME IS DECIDED ON A MAJORITY SYSTEM (THE WINNING LSATE TAKING TWO-THIRDS OF THE SEATS), ELECTIONS OF THE TYPE HAVE HAD NATIONAL IMPLICATIONS IN THE PAST AS TESTS OF THE OVERALL PLITICAL MOOD. IN THIS CASE, TI WILL BE THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY AFTER THE FORMATION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT FOR VOTERS TO EXPRESS THEIR OPINIONS AT THE POLLS. THIS WILL LEAD OBSERVERS TO VIEW THE RESULTS AS INDICATIONS OF SUPPORT OFR, OR DISATISFACTION WITH, THE POLITICIAL FORUMLA WORKED OUT RECENTLY IN ROME IN WHICH THE PCI JOINED THE GOVERNMENT'S PARLIAMENTARY MAJOITY.

3. IN FACT, ALL PARTIES ARE ATTACHING PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE TO THE COMING ELECTIONS. DESPITE ITS OBVIOUS PREOCCUPATION WITH THE MORO CASE, THE DC HAS NOT NEGLECTED CONSULTATIONS AND PREPARATIONS FOR THE CONTESTS. THE PARTY HOPES TO DO WELL IN THE ELECTIONS AND TO DEONONSTRATE THAT IT CAN MAINTAIN AND PERHAPS EVEN IMPROVE ITS ELECTORAL STANDING. THE COMMUNISTS ARE SIMIALRLY ANXIOUS TO SHOW THAT THEY CONTINUE TO GROW IN STRENGTH AND VOTER SUPPORT. EVEN A RELATIVELY SMALL SETBACK COULD HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE PCI'S POLITICAL STANDING BY DEMONSTRATING THAT THE COMMUNIST ADVANCE IS NOT IRREVERSIBLE. THUS, PCI SECRETARIAT MEMBER COSSUTA EXHORTED PARTY WORKERS TO ASSURE THAT THE ELECTIONS RESULT IN "NEW COMMUNIST ADVANCE" SINCE THE RESULTS WOULD INFLUENCE BOTH "THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LOCAL AND NATIONAL" POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES OF THE PARTY. COMING AS IT DOES SOON AFTER THE SOCIALIST PARTY CONGRESS, THE MEASUREOF PSI SUCCESS IN THE VOTE WILL BE SEEN AS A TEST FORPSI SECRETARY CRAXI'S MORE AUTONOMOUS LINE. THE ELECTIONS WILL ALSO BE A TEST FOR THE LIBERAL PARTY IN ITS NEW ROLE AS AN OPPOSITION PARTY..

4. THE MOROKIDNAPPING IS EXPECTED TO HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE VOTING ALTHOUGH ITS PRECISE NATURE IS DIFFICULT TO PRDICT, AND MAY, IN FACT, OBSCURE ATTEMPTS TO DRAW PUBLIC ORDER AND TERRORISM IS VERY MUCH ON THE MIND OF THE VOTING PUBLIC AND IS ONE WHICH CNADIDATES OF ALL PARTIES CAN BE EXPECTED TO ADDRESS. THE DEATH SENTENCE FOR MORO BY THE RED BRIGADE MAY RESULT IN GREATER SUPPORT FOR DC CANDIDATES IN FORM OF A SYMPATHY VOTE. THE PCI, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN IN THE FOREFRONT OF THE LAW-AND-ORDER ADVOCATES, VIGOROUS IN ITS CONDEMNATION OF TERRORISM AND LAWLESSNESS AND VOCAL IN ITS SUPPORT OF DEMOCRATIC INSITITUIONS.

5. WE ARE POUCHING TO EUR/WE AND INR/RES/SE A LIST OF THE CITIES AND TOWNS INVOLVED IN THIS SPRING'S LOCAL

ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS.

6. JUNE 11 HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED AS THE DATE OF NATIONAL REFERENDA ON FIVE ISSUES (SEE REFTTEL). BEFORE THAT DATE, HOWEVER, THE FIVE PARTIES SUPPORTING THE GOVERNMENT WILL TRY TO ENACT LEGISLATION ON FOUR OF THE ISSUES (INCLUDING ABORTION) WHICH WOULD OBVIATE THE NEED TO HOLD REFERENDA. ONLY THE FIFTH ISSUE, THAT OF FINANCING OF POLITICAL PARTIES, IS THEN EXPECTED TO GO BEFORE THE VOTERS AS A REFERENDUM.GARDNER

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